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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Law Gives Terry Goddard New Tool to Fight Human Smuggling

(Phoenix, Ariz. – August 31, 2004) Arizona has seen a dramatic rise in the number of extortion incidents, kidnappings and home invasions as a result of human smuggling/coyote activities. Last week, law enforcement officials received a weapon to hit the coyote organizations where it hurts the most – in the pocket book.

The "Coyote RICO" legislation, adopted during the last legislative session, became effective last week. It takes aim at the assets acquired from coyote activity. It is estimated that in Phoenix alone, more than \$320 million per year is paid to coyote organizations.

The statute targets coyote violence by taking the profit out of human smuggling. Under this bill, the Attorney General's Office now has the ability to seize smugglers' assets such as vehicles, safe houses, and bank accounts.

"Kidnapping, rape and murder are becoming more commonplace as Arizona experiences a dramatic increase in human smuggling," Goddard said. "This legislation provides a tool to strike back at the coyote organizations by taking away their assets."

The new law provides for **civil remedies only**. Racketeering would include any act:

- Committed for financial gain by persons acting in concert who acquire over \$5,000 in a one month period.
- Punishable by over one year imprisonment under federal law.
- Described in specified federal laws related to bringing in/harboring undocumented individuals.

The coyote trade is directly linked to violence.

- In Maricopa County, there have been 61 coyote-related homicides from 1/1/03 – 9/30/03 (over 50 percent of all homicides)
- In Phoenix in fiscal year 1998, there were 96 home invasion crimes. By fiscal year 2002, there were 490 home invasion crimes
- In Phoenix, there are a rising number of extortion incidents, kidnappings, and home invasions. In 2002-2003 there were 623 such incidents, 75 percent of which resulted from human smuggling activities
- Sexual exploitation of undocumented immigrants is a rising crime in the form of sexual assault, forced prostitution, and child prostitution.

"This statute offers a way to combat the violence that accompanies coyote activity in neighborhoods throughout Arizona," Goddard said.

This legislation was championed by Senator Linda Aguirre and Representative Michele Reagan, and their support was critical in its passage.

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